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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/08/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: SL HANDLES FAKE COUP THREAT, EXTORTIONIST ARRESTED
IN GHANA

Classified By: Political Officer Amy LeMar for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (S/NF) Highly-placed sources within the Sierra Leonean intelligence community shared details on July 7 and 8 of a fake coup plot and extortion attempt that came to light on July 2. A presumed Sierra Leonean national approached the Sierra Leonean High Commissioner to Ghana and shared details of a planned coup involving ex-combatant mercenaries. The mercenaries supposedly were situated in two camps in Guinea, and were waiting for further reinforcements sent by sea in a "black, white, and yellow" vessel. The individual claimed that the mercenaries are tied to the President of Burkina Faso, who allegedly claimed interest in a private meeting with Guinean junta leaders to want access to Sierra Leonean mineral resources. The individual told the Sierra Leonean High Commissioner that he would accept a payment of USD 30,000 to stop the coup attempt.

2.(S/NF) The High Commissioner immediately shared this information with President Koroma, and an emergency session of the National Security Council (NSC) was convened. Though the NSC deemed the threat as non-credible, they elected to treat it as a preparedness exercise. Border stations, particularly near Kambia, were put on alert, and a naval patrol craft was launched to search for the mercenary vessel. The individual returned to the High Commission on July 6 for his "payment" and was instead arrested by Ghanaian intelligence services. Sierra Leone authorities intend to debrief this individual in Ghana as soon as possible.

13. (S/NF) Comment: Embassy sources consider this incident to be a success in terms of demonstrating preparedness to a President who logically fears even whispers related to possible coups. They are also pleased at the level of cooperation with Ghanaian officials. Sources indicated that there are no credible coup threats to Koroma at this time, but that even extortionist situations like this one can lead to further, unwanted unrest in the sub-region. End Comment.
FEDZER